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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/01/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [VE](#) [UNSC](#) [FR](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE OPPOSES VENEZUELA UNSC SEAT BUT RELUCTANT
TO LOBBY, OPEN IN PRINCIPLE TO ARMS SALES

REF: A. STATE 162359

[1](#)B. STATE 155336

Classified By: PolMC Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

FRANCE AGAINST UNSC SEAT FOR VENEZUELA, BUT RELUCTANT TO LOBBY

[1](#)1. (C) In a September 27 meeting with poloff on other issues (prior to reception of ref A), MFA IO PDAS-Equivalent Marc Giacomini commented that Venezuela would do great harm to Security Council credibility, if elected. That said, Giacomini thought it significant that Venezuela had come up short in its electioneering for a seat on the Human Rights Council and he believed there may be similar slippage in Venezuelan chances for a Security Council seat. Chavez's embrace of Iranian President Ahmadinejad was a mistake that would rattle moderate Arab nations, he claimed. Moreover, Chavez's UNGA speech had been offensive. France, for its part, was "99 per cent" certain to vote for Guatemala over Venezuela; that decision, however, needed to be ratified at the top levels of the French government.

[1](#)2. (C) Asked if France would consider lobbying diplomatically on behalf of Guatemala with African governments, Giacomini, expressing discomfort, averred that such a campaign would be highly unusual for France. Poloff suggested France consider targeted approaches to specific

African leaders, such as Presidents Bongo in Gabon or Sassou-Nguesso in Congo-Brazzaville. Giacomini reacted that such French diplomatic engagement would be more appropriate among the UN missions in New York. (Comment: Giacomini confirmed our understanding of the opposition of the French MFA IO bureau to Venezuelan membership on the Security Council. He equally confirmed, however, that the IO bureau is not calling the shots at this time on how France will proceed, tactically or strategically.)

13. (C) In a separate September 27 meeting with MFA DAS-equivalent for South America Michel Pinard to discuss ref B points on arms transfers (see paras 5-6), Deputy Polcouns asked if the French evaluation of Chavez had changed in the wake of his disgraceful UNGA performance. Pinard responded that Chavez had made anti-Americanism his *raison d'etre*, which led Chavez to assume extreme positions and consort with countries such as Iran. He agreed that the election of Venezuela would negatively impact the effectiveness of the UN Security Council. (Comment: This was the first time that Pinard, unlike his counterparts in IO and at the presidential palace, appeared to take as a given that France would not support Venezuelan membership. End comment.)

14. (C) Pinard expressed pessimism that it would be possible in the end to prevent Venezuela from winning a rotating seat on the council. Deputy Polcouns suggested that France had a role to play in lobbying others, particularly in Africa, to vote against Venezuela. Pinard demurred, saying that overt support for Guatemala could have an adverse effect on French relations with Venezuela; it was unlikely that France would campaign actively against Venezuela. (Comment: In our experience, Pinard consistently overestimates Venezuela's

importance for French interests compared to his counterparts in IO and the Presidency. End comment.) He nonetheless conceded that, if asked, France might be prepared to make its view known that the selection of Venezuela would be a mistake.

ARMS SALES

15. (C) Per ref B, Deputy Polcouns outlined U.S. policy on the termination of all arms sales and transfers to Venezuela, stressing that Venezuela's arms acquisition program exceeded its needs and that the U.S. was concerned that even small arms could end up in the hands of local terrorist groups. He nonetheless expressed appreciation for France's decision to refrain from submarine sales, for example.

16. (C) Pinard stated in response that, as a matter of principle, France would not rule out arms sales entirely, given that it had an interest in maintaining its relationship with the Venezuelan military, mainly in the way of training programs and sales of light arms. As on past occasions, he rejected the assertion that Venezuelan arms purchases had the potential of changing the regional military balance, arguing that Venezuela posed no military threat to its neighbors. He described the Venezuelan army as one trained to parade rather than to fight, in contrast to its battle-hardened counterpart in Colombia. He argued that the FARC had no interest in acquiring arms from Venezuela since it was already well-equipped.

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